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# THE INTELLIGENCE WAR LESSONS OF THE PATHE AFFAIR

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FOR the first time, a Western journalist has been sent to jail for spreading disinformation on behalf of the Russian secret service, the KGB.

The journalist concerned is Mr Pierre-Charles Pathe, whose father was famous as one of the pioneers of the modern cinema industry. For 20 years he carried out the orders of a series of KGB case officers in Paris—many of them working under Unesco cover—planting stories in the French Press that were calculated to sow division between Nato countries and discredit Western secret services, especially the CIA.

Pathe was arrested by the French security service, the DST, in July last year at a cafe in the Place Gambetta, where he was attending a clandestine meeting with this current KGB control, Igor Kuzentsov. Pathe had just handed the Soviet spy a batch of papers, including a list of subscribers to his bi-monthly bulletin, SYNTHESIS, which had been set up with the help of Russian money.

## Titillating gossip

Pathe was never in a position to supply the KGB with top-secret Government documents, although the social entrée he enjoyed allowed him to transmit a fair amount of titillating personal gossip about leading politicians and journalists whom the Russians wished to compromise or manipulate.

After he became an organiser of the anti-American movement for an Independent Europe, he was in regular contact with many leading Gaullists, as well as Socialists.

He was also able to supply personal background on a member of the French secret service, S D E C E, with whom he had become familiar.

But Pathe's importance to the KGB was not as a conventional cloak-and-dagger agent of influence, someone in a position to deceive the media and Western public

By putting Pathe behind bars, the French Court of State Security publicly recognised that this form of Soviet covert action—which has attracted astonishingly little attention from the Western Press—may represent a danger equal to traditional espionage.

One of the KGB's most powerful departments, Service A, is specifically tasked with the spreading of disinformation in Western countries, and has worked, with notable success, to whip up the campaign against Western intelligence services and to mount character assassination campaigns against individuals who are deemed hostile to Moscow's interests.

## Soviet-angled

A bulky CIA study of Soviet covert action programmes that was presented to the House Select Committee on Intelligence last February describes what Pathe was able to achieve for the KGB, although the agent's name and nationality were omitted pending the outcome of his court case.

This CIA study notes that the KGB prepared newspaper articles for Pathe that he would either publish himself—frequently under a pseudonym—or pass on to other journalists. "The articles were on international topics and included, very subtly, the Soviet line on everything from China to Latin America."

Pathe was used, according to the report, to publish anti-CIA articles at the time that the CIA defector, Mr Philip Agee, and his acolytes, were beginning to get world attention for their allegations against Western secret services.

"Over the period from 1960-79," the study continues, "Pathe wrote over 100 articles which were Soviet-inspired, had his hand in several publications, and was also the editor of a newsletter which was substantial political and industrial officials."

The mechanics of how the professional disinformers of Service A plant material in the Western Press have been described by a KGB defector, Alexander Yurievich Kaznachayev, whose last posting was under cover at the Soviet Embassy in Rangoon.

## On microfilm

In his debriefings, Kaznachayev recounted how KGB prepared articles designed to be planted in Asian newspapers would be sent to the Rangoon Embassy on microfilm, translated into English and Burmese, and fanned out to trusted agents in the local media.

After publication, the text of the final products would be carefully checked against the originals, and a full report sent back to Moscow Centre via Tass news agency channels. Soviet "journalists" and "diplomats" in other capitals would then be charged with the task of spreading the deception as widely as possible.

KGB forgeries of American and British Government documents are a favourite element in these media operations. Many are eventually exposed as forgeries, but the impact of an apology and retraction is often far less than that of the original, sensationalist news splash.

It is doubtful whether a British or American court would

have sentenced Pathe to five years' imprisonment, because the law works differently. Since he accepted cash payments totalling 100,000 francs from the KGB over the years, however, he might have been considered liable to face charges in the United States on the grounds that he had failed to register as an agent of a foreign Government.

The Pathe case has exposed only the tip of the iceberg of KGB undercover efforts to manipulate the Western media. Informed sources in Paris say that the DST's continuing investigations have turned up leads to many other Soviet disinformation agents, one of them a well-known figure in London with close ties to the Polish secret service, or UB.

## Soviet intrigue in Syria

THE flow of Soviet arms and advisers to Syria has been stepped up, following a visit to Damascus by a high-level Soviet military delegation last month and a subsequent trip to Moscow by the Syrian defence minister, General Mustafa Tlas.

Western intelligence sources believe that the number of Soviet troops and advisers in Syria—now said to be about 4,000—will be more than doubled as the result of a new secret agreement.

But the appearance in Damascus in early June of Maj. Gen. Shevlok, one of the key deputies of Gen. Yepishev, the chief of the Soviet Army's Main Political Administration, may have caused Syria's President Assad to worry about the intentions of his allies in Moscow.

Western diplomats in Damascus speculate that Shevlok was assigned the sensitive mission of reporting on whether—in the face of the violent groundswell of opposition to Assad's régime—the Russians should continue